

## Testimony regarding HB 5037

Testimony by Dellon Singh

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Appropriation Committee

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Representative Walker, Senator Osten and members of the Appropriation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Dellon Singh, and I reside in West Haven. I am a new childcare provider. Occupational Fun Edu-Childcare is a family childcare that provides developmental skills to young children who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. I started OFEC because of the way my daughter was treated in school. As a trained therapist, I can provide developmental and educational service. OFEC is located in West Haven, CT. I am licensed for 6 + 3 capacity serving children 2 to 13 years old. I am a member of CERCLE, a network of over 40 childcare providers serving children and families of color.

I am writing today to testify **against** Governor Lamont's proposed Office of Early Childhood budget, and to voice my anger and deep disappointment that the Governor's Office of Early Childhood budget is doing nothing to address the current financial crisis in the childcare industry. If the OEC budget does not support the early childhood industry, I worry what this will mean for the many children and families that rely on us each day. We are asking that the final budget include substantial investment in early care and education.

Early childhood education is very important to child development. Children are our future, and we need to invest in our future. Early childhood educators, and teachers are essential workers who needs to be properly compensated for the vital work they do. America is supposed to be a superpower the world looks up to us. How is America supposed to pave the way to the future if you do not provide the necessary resources to help fund the future leaders by providing financial resources to ECE? Early childhood as you may know has been widely studied by Piaget, Maslow, Montessori, Vygotsky and all the great psychologist who provided the foundation for us to help children grow and develop. ECE helps with cognitive, social/emotional, physical, and language. As an ECE and therapist, observation is key, and education begins the minute the child walks through the door. ECE are not babysitters, we are educators. The dilemma of ECE is, this industry is not getting the cost-of-living wages that is necessary to take care of family, pay bills, insurance, and supplies. It is a disgrace that early childhood educators provide such an important service to educate our future generation but yet get paid so little compared to entertainers and athletes.

I implore you to invest in early childhood educators by providing a cost-of-living wage especially now since the cost of living has risen and makes it more arduous to maintain and run your own business when you can not make a profit to keep the business afloat.

Yet, many early childhood programs remained open during the early pandemic, we were there for the essential workers, we were there to support the health care workers, we took in school age children.

Now we are at a breaking point. The childcare industry is crumbling around us, we can't pay our staff appropriate wages and benefits, centers are closing classrooms and many providers are on the verge of closing for good. We support children's growth, the ability of parents to work, and the overall economic wellbeing of the state. Without available and affordable childcare, we will not have a strong economy. We need you to value children, families, and the early care industry that is there to support them!

We need substantial state investment before it is too late! Thank you for considering these issues.